WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Health problem due to radio-activity near Jaduguda mines

1210. PROF. A. LAKSHMI SAGAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the sufferings of the tribals of Jaduguda (Jharkhand) from various ailments linked to radioactivity from the mines and the ponds of the public sector Uranium Corporation of India Ltd.;

(b) if so, whether Government have made any study to know the gravity of the health problems being faced by the tribals of the hamlets surrounding the UCIL;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what measures have been taken to protect them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (d) Government have come across media reports alleging that the population in and around the Jaduguda region is suffering from certain health hazards/effects due to operation of mines of Uranium Corporation of India Ltd. (UCIL). These reports have no basis. UCIL, a public sector undertaking of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), at present operates three underground uranium mines at Jaduguda, Bhatin and Narwapahar and a mill at Jaduguda for processing the ore from all the mines for recovering uranium. All these facilities are located in the East Singhbhum District of Jharkhand State. UCIL has put in place measures necessary for radiological safety and the radiation levels at Jaduguda (Jharkhand) and in the surrounding areas are well within the permissible limits laid down for the purpose by the Atomic Energy

Regulatory Board. In addition, for the systematic and effective monitoring of radiation levels in and around the mines/mills, a well equipped Health Physics Unit-cum-Environmental Survey Laboratory of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), which is independent of UCIL, has been in operation at Jaduguda since the inception of UCIL. The scientists of this Unit, qualified and trained in the field of radiological safety and protection, regularly measure the radioactivity in the area, maintain constant surveillance on environmental releases and undertake measurements of pollutants in the atmospheric and aquatic systems of the environment in and around Jaduguda.

Surveys conducted in the past by teams of medical doctors and specialists including doctors from the Tata Main Hospital, Jamshedpur and Health Department of the Government of Bihar, and Health Physicists and Medical Officers from BARC have also established that the specific cases of diseases examined by the teams have no relation to radiation. Recent radiation survey of the area around Jaduguda has also reconfirmed that the operations of UCIL have not resulted in any increase in the background radiation levels beyond those prescribed by AERB.

Appropriate mechanisms are already in place to ensure the safety of mine workers. The radiation levels in and around Jaduguda on account of releases from mines/plants of UCIL are regularly monitored and are found to be within the limits prescribed in this behalf by the AERB which are, in turn based on the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection.